Gingerbread fun

Easy steps to build a dream house

TASTE

THE PLAIN DEALER

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Wednesday, December 13, 2017

1842 175 years 2017

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Today's weather

Some snow in afternoon.

High: 27
Low: 23

Thursday: Colder, 27 | 11
Friday: Snow, 31 | 22

Weather report. **A2**

Metro&State

State may ease graduation test requirements

Ohio's new test score requirements to graduate from high school could be eased again, under plans gaining traction in the state school board. **A8**

Nation&World

Failed bomber mocked Trump before attack

The Bangladeshi man arrested in a botched bombing in New York mocked President Donald Trump on Facebook on his way to the attack. **A10**

Business

Why your credit scores can look so different

Money Matters: How come a credit score can be wildly inconsistent among the three reporting agencies? Teresa Dixon Murray explains. **A16**

Sports

Cavs prevail over Hawks in battle of 3-pointers

The Cavaliers and Atlanta Hawks combined for 36 three-pointers Tuesday. The Cavs made 20 of them and beat Atlanta, 123-114. **B1**

Forum

An editor on why the truth still matters

Opinion: Despite all the political lies, there is no denying there is such a thing as the truth. The larger question: Do people still care? **E1**

Diversions

Laura Dern and that time she hugged a Wookiee

Laura Dern says that becoming part of the "Star Wars" legacy has reminded her of how the films bring people back to their childhoods. **P1**

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Index

Business A16
Classifieds B6
Comics O1, P1
Crossword O4, P4
Deaths A18
Forum E1
Lotteries A2
Metro A4
Nation & World A10
Sports B1
Taste C1
TV Listings P2

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Special Senate election

Democrat wins in Alabama

Jones beats Moore in historic GOP upset

Kim Chandler and Steve Peoples
Associated Press

Montgomery, Ala. — In a stunning victory aided by scandal, Democrat Doug Jones won Alabama's special Senate election on Tuesday, beating back history, an embattled Republican opponent and President Donald Trump, who urgently endorsed GOP rebel Roy Moore despite a litany of sexual misconduct allegations.

It was the first Democratic Senate victory in a quarter-century in Alabama, one of the reddest of red states, and proved anew that party loyalty is anything but sure in the age of Trump. The Republican loss was a major embarrassment for the president and a fresh wound for the nation's already divided GOP.

"We have shown not just around the state of Alabama, but we have shown the country the way — that we can be unified," Jones declared as supporters in a Birmingham ballroom cheered, danced and cried tears of joy.

see ALABAMA | A12

JOHN BAZEMORE | ASSOCIATED PRESS

Candidate Doug Jones in Birmingham, Alabama, Tuesday, after winning.

Digging out before the fun

CHUCK CROW | THE PLAIN DEALER

Jill Banks lifts a shovel full of snow out of the Cleveland Foundation Ice Rink on Cleveland Public Square on Tuesday. A couple of inches of snow had fallen on the outdoor rink overnight. It took about an hour to clean the snow off the ice, then the ice had to be smoothed out for skaters. The ice rink is open daily through Feb. 28. The cost is $10 including skate rental, or $7 if you bring your own.

Cuyahoga County

Accounting balance is still off by $1.7M

Firm hired to try to reconcile 2 systems

Karen Farkas
kfarkas@cleveland.com

Cuyahoga County has spent years trying to balance its version of the county checkbook — and it is still $1.7 million off.

For the last four years, the county has been unable to reconcile the funds in its bank balance with the book balance, which includes uncleared checks and deposits, according to the state auditor's annual financial audits, which have listed the problem as a "significant deficiency."

The money was not misplaced but may never be found, although it won't be for a lack of effort, Fiscal Officer Dennis Kennedy said. The discrepancy could date back as far as 20 years when, under the former commissioner form of government, the auditor and treasurer had different systems and did not want to share information, he said.

"When I got here in the middle of 2015, we tried to identify how to correct the difference, but the financial reporting system I still use was adopted in 1988 and the treasurer's system was adopted in 1999," he said. "It's like trying to reconstruct bank records for the last 15 years."

The Dec. 31, 2016, cash fund balance review showed the adjusted bank balances total $957,124,789 and the book balance was $958,869,993, for an unreconciled book over bank adjustment of $1,745,204, according to the financial audit released on Nov. 14.

see FUNDS | A18

East Cleveland

Landlords sue city over fee hike

Tenfold increase per rental unit termed 'cash grab'

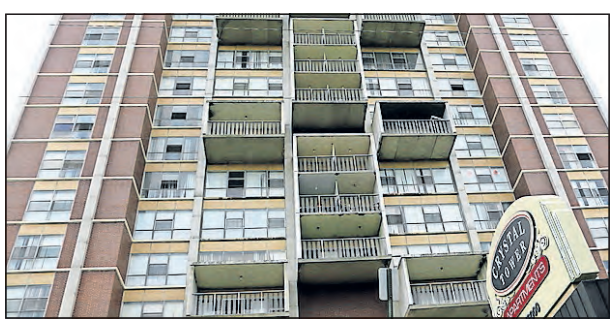
Michelle Jarboe
mjarboe@plaind.com

East Cleveland — Two large Northeast Ohio landlords are suing the city of East Cleveland over a sharp occupancy-fee hike that they characterize as an illegal cash grab.

At a public meeting in June, East Cleveland City Council approved legislation to increase the city's annual fee for rentals from $10 to $100 a unit. That means a landlord who has been paying $2,600 a year in city occupancy fees for a 260-unit building now must pay $26,000. The payments are due by mid-January. Landlords say they recently became aware of the change.

Now the K&D Group and PK Management are challenging the city's move.

see RENTALS | A7



MARVIN FONG | THE PLAIN DEALER

The owner of Crystal Tower, a 280-unit apartment building in East Cleveland, is one of two landlords suing the city over a recent increase in occupancy fees for rental housing, from $10 to $100 per unit.

Senator fires back

Trump Twitter post called 'sexist smear'

Michael Tackett and Eileen Sullivan
New York Times

Washington — President Donald Trump aggressively returned to the issue of sexual harassment Tuesday, again dismissing his own accusers as fabricators and attacking a female Democratic senator as a "lightweight" who "would do anything" for campaign contributions.

The president's attacks came in early morning Twitter posts after three of the accusers had come forward Monday to renew their charges from last year that Trump had sexually assaulted them before he entered politics, and after the senator, Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, had called for him to resign.

While Trump weathered the accusations during his presidential campaign, the flood of recent allegations against powerful men has revived the issue of sexual harassment with a newfound fury.

Gillibrand was quick to fire back at Trump over his Twitter comments.

see TRUMP | A15

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